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ABSTRACT

The dean selection process and its relationship to the political process of governance in higher education institutions are discussed. Data were collected from 31 institutions that were in the process of selecting a dean. Questionnaires were sent to selection committee chairpersons and members, and to the deans who were eventually selected. A model developed by Bailey (1965) for describing, analyzing, and predicting selection committee behavior was used for this study of search and screening committees. A discussion of the two types of councils included in Bailey's model--elite and arena--is presented. Analysis of the data indicates that the search and screening committees should be considered elite councils. None of the data indicate that there was an effort by individual committee members to represent any segment of the faculty, nor did students appear to have much influence on the selection process. Only a very small percentage of committee members were members of central administrations. The committees appeared to be acting as trustees for the university community as a whole and not as a group of delegates for separate factions. It is concluded that this decision-making process is elite in nature. Implications and other conclusions based on data concerning committee composition, the screening and selection process, and affirmative action are included. (SF)

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THE GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS OF DEANSHIP SELECTION: AND OTHER SELECTED THOUGHTS ON THE PROCESS

by

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INTRODUCTION

Each year hundreds of deanships are filled in the United States. As a matter of procedure each position has its commensurate search and screening committee. Because of the nature of the task, most of these committees work largely in private and having begun with little knowledge of what to do or how to do it, disband wiser but in no position to be of assistance in helping other search committees based on what they have learned. This research was undertaken in the hope of providing a broader base and more accessible knowledge than search-screening committees have here-to-fore had available.

DATA COLLECTION

Sample and Method of Analyses

All issues of the Chronicle of Higher Education between January 1, 1974, and April 1, 1977, were reviewed. Every major university which advertised an opening for the deanship in colleges of Business Administration, Nursing or Liberal Arts during that period were selected in the initial population, N = 62. Letters were sent to the chairperson of record in each advertisement. Information was requested regarding the names and addresses of committee members and the dean selected. From these 62 institutions, 31 institutional responses were received. Using these 31 institutions, questionnaires were sent: one type to committee chairpersons, another type to committee members, a third type to the deans identified as having been

selected. Final usable responses from these groups included: 118 committee persons, 22 committee chairpersons and 16 deans. Table I describes the sample.

Enter Table I About Here

Data from the questionnaires were keypunched and analyzed in an effort to be descriptive of the typical selection process and determine what, if any, differences existed from that practice and to what, if any, effect. We also looked for differences in satisfaction reported by both the selection committees and the deans selected, and if these differences could be attributed to any process variables.

Due to the space and time limitations imposed here only the analysis of the political-governance process will be reported here. Other conclusions based on analyses not reported here are also provided.* As the sample size was limited the conclusions should be thought of as hypotheses generating rather than hypotheses tested.

Theoretical Model

One purpose of the study was to examine the search-screen-selection practice in the light of some theoretical model in order that the generalizations might afford some broader application than the usual "best practice" statements which are simply descriptive. The political process of governance in higher education (as it is related to a dean selection activity) was of particular interest.

*The complete monograph may be obtained by writing to The Center for the Study of Higher Education, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802.

Based on his experiences observing and analyzing decision-making councils in India and in universities, Bailey (1965) developed a model for describing, analyzing, and predicting council behavior and the events that surround them. Others also working in political anthropology extended that work to other countries (Richards and Kuper, 1971). On several occasions the model has been found useful in describing and explaining the behavior of public school boards in the United States (Lutz and Iannaccone, 1978). Recently Bailey (1977) has used the model in his analysis of university decision-making committees and councils. Given that university committees provided one of the bases of the original formulation and that the model appears to have broad conceptual application, it was selected as the theoretical model for this study of search and screening committees.

The Model

Bailey (1965) suggests two "ideal typical" types of councils at either end of a continuum of council behavior, noting that no council is likely to achieve the exact "ideal typical" behavior in every decision and condition. These types, elite and arena, are schematically indicated in Figure 1 and briefly described below.

Enter Figure 1 About Here

Elite councils, although often masking the fact, consider themselves as ruling oligarchies. They: (1) are guardians of the people, (2) are separate from the people, (3) strive for consensus, (4) make their decision in nonpublic sessions, (5) enact those decisions in public by unanimous

vote, and (6) tend to be composed of less than 15 members. Arena councils view themselves as delegates of differing factions of the public and iron out their differences by public debates. They: (1) are community in council, (2) are delegates of factional constituencies, (3) publicly and vigorously debate issues, (4) attempt to attract sufficient others to form a strong enough coalition in order to win, (5) decide issues by majority vote, and (6) tend to be composed of 15 or more members.

In his 1965 work, Bailey appears to prefer a somewhat arena type council. He reports when the majority "batter down the minority in the name of the common good . . . the common good at the end is not the same as the common good at the beginning. The common good which the minority preserves by their withdrawal is the good of closed ranks among the guardians." He also states that in elite councils the dissidents "feared to enter the ring at all or had already been worsted by crooked means beforehand." He quotes (Morris-Jones, 1960, p. 1031): "Consensus is a fair name for what may be an ugly reality." "In such circumstances," Bailey continues, "the [unrepresented] underprivileged are not likely to feel that they are governing themselves and not likely to become enthusiastic about working for village development. . . . what is needed, in fact, is not consensus, but more conflict . . ." (Ibid., pp. 12-19).

When discussing university councils and committees, Bailey (1977) appears to take a different position. He points out that the councils of the faculty (i.e., faculty councils and senates) tend to be arena, larger than 15 members, debate issues, and decide by majority vote. However, he

suggests that most often smaller committees operating in elite fashion, coming to consensus and with a unanimous report, recommend to such arena councils. Almost always their report is accepted and implemented by the arena council, becoming what might be termed a "rubber stamp" for the elite committee. "The effective committee becomes one that can steer the larger body." Such committees cannot work effectively unless they use such information [institutional gossip]. Those who think they make the 'real decisions' which will have consequences and who do so from a position of superior responsibility, will be inclined to form themselves, as far as possible, into a private [elite] committee. To summarize, when the members of a committee feel that the decisions which they reach will have important practical consequences, they tend to seek privacy (Ibid., pp. 64-74).

Bailey justifies this elite system in universities, where I would judge, he is not likely to among the "underprivileged." He mentions in his 1977 work that, in universities, these elite committees only report to (albeit often control) more arena councils, thereby providing the opportunity for broad participation. My own personal experience indicates that the more privileged are always more in favor of elite council behavior. Be that as it may, even Bailey's questionable defense of his conclusions about university decision-making would fall apart, it would appear, if the elite committee reports, not to a larger more arena body, but to a smaller more elite body. Our data will bear on questions which might be posed by these statements.

DATA ANALYSIS: ELITE-ARENA

It has been proposed that every educational decision is a political decision. If one accepts Easton's (1965) position that politics is the authoritive allocation of values, then that proposition is true. More particularly, if one accepts this definition of politics, then the decision about the selection of a new dean is a political one. If an insider is selected, one set of values is enhanced, and if an outsider is selected, another set enhanced. The same is true about the cosmopolitan versus local orientations of the person selected or organizational maintenance versus change agent, or researcher versus teaching and service orientations of the new dean. Thus it seems appropriate to use a model from political-anthropology to examine the process, for no decision is more political and no group can be more clearly viewed as a culture than a community of scholars (the faculty). Bailey's elite-arena model, briefly described above, provides just such a model.

Is the Committee an Elite or Arena Council?

Recalling the criteria that describes and therefore classifies councils as elite or arena, the data (set against these criteria in Table II) enables some determination of placement of the screening committee along the elite-arena continuum.

Place Table II About Here

On three of the four criterion, the search-screening committee is classified as an elite council. Remembering that the prototype are "ideal

typical," and no council will always behave in every action and under every circumstance in either elite or arena fashion, it seems fair to suggest that the typical search committee tends to be an elite council.

The data fit very nicely into the classifications described in Table II. Although the size of the majority of committees was above the six suggested in the literature, none reported greater than 15 members. On this criterion, committees are clearly elite councils.

None of our data indicate that there was any effort of individual committee members to represent any segment of the faculty, nor did students appear to have much influence as representatives of the student body. Additionally, only a very small percentage of committee members were members of central administration. Thus administrative "faction" was not represented in delegate fashion on the committee (central administration influences in other, more effective ways). Thus the committee must be seen as acting as trustees for the university community as a whole and not as a group of delegates for separate factions of the university community, again descriptive of elite councils.

Of course, the process of decision-making about a new dean must be private in nature. While decisions of the committee are made public, the process of the personnel decision is not and perhaps cannot be public. Further it appears from the data that the closer the committee gets to making a decision about a ranked (or unranked) group of finalists to recommend to the university administration, the less important public data and record become and the more important off the record information becomes.

To paraphrase Bailey, it is an elite council where the gossip and rumor type of data becomes important and the rational and public process less useful. Here in the private sessions of the elite committee the notion of the "best fit" candidate--regardless of the empirical data--can be resolved. Here is where the screening process is settled and must finally become idosyncratic. The process of decision is elite in nature.

Finally, given the above, one would expect that search-screening committees would work hard to achieve consensus. If they were consistent in their council behavior, they would decide by unanimous vote about the group to be recommended and (if permitted), the ranking of the group. But political life is seldom so neat. Seventy percent of the committee members said they made their decision by a split vote. What we do not know is how the decision was publicly presented. Did the minority retire in favor of the common good (preserving consensus)? It is likely that they often did. It is considerably less likely that a formal minority report or ranking was made public--although perhaps a few dissenters "allowed" their unhappiness to "informally leak." All of this is speculation, however, regardless of how reasonably "informed." The data indicate 70 percent split vote and search-screening committees exhibit arena council behavior on this criterion. Yet as previously indicated, no council behaves totally consistently as elite or arena. We should not be surprised that the data do not totally conform to either one of the other "ideal typical" form of council behavior. Taken as a whole it seems reasonable to indicate that search-screening committees operate as elite councils.

Implications of the Elite Classification

In order to understand the implications of asserting that search-screening committees are elite councils, one must return to what Bailey has to say about such councils. In doing so, it is necessary to make certain jumps from the political world of an East Indian community to the community of scholars in the United States. In India, money, land, livestock, and rank are indicators of influence and prestige. In the scholarly community, length of time at the institutions, publications, service to the institution, and rank and tenure are indicators of rank and prestige. In either case, however, those with little of the attributes are "poor" and, as Bailey points out with regard to India, likely to be of little influence and be disenfranchised, in elite councils particularly. He goes further by saying that in such decisions these disenfranchised tend to feel "worsted by crooked means" and are not likely to work for the good of or the improvement of the community. What then of the new dean who must work with the entire faculty? What chance does a new dean have under those circumstances to become accepted or to provide leadership for the entire faculty?

But when applying his framework to his analysis of university decision-making (Bailey, 1977), although admitting that the councils that formulate the decisions are generally elite councils, Bailey is not so hard on the university governance process as he is on the public governance process. He points out that while small elite councils formulate decisions, they recommend them to larger more arena councils for action. Thus, although he admits that the action by the arena council is usually *pro forma*, arena

council behavior is possible. Of considerable importance to Bailey, the notion of community is preserved within the university by the elite council behavior. This community, one supposes, is the group of full-tenured professors. It seems to exclude a considerable number of other groups interested in the university. And even within that select "community," the knowledgeable (including Bailey, I am sure) will admit secretly to a group of disenfranchised. Be that as it may, and given the ideals of academic freedom and peer judgment, one might make a case for Bailey's position, particularly given the notion of final action by the arena type council.

Our data indicate that the search-screening committee does not make the final decision but, as Bailey points out about the elite committees, merely recommends to another decision maker. In the case of the decision about a new dean, the decision is not made by a larger more arena council but a much smaller more elite council, perhaps by a single person. What then might be predicted about the outcome of the decision process resulting in the hiring of a new dean? Several possibilities are suggested by the model.

Elite-Arena Council Behavior

1. If there is a considerable amount of agreement among the interest groups (administration, faculty ranks, students, etc.) about the goals, values and needs of the organization (if the community is composed of rather homogeneous subcultures)--then an elite decision will be accepted and organizational progress may be expected without much conflict.

2. As there is conflict about the goals, values and needs of the organization, and as this division can be viewed as between those with power and the relatively powerless; as the powerful have been successful in correctly assessing the selected candidate, and as the candidate has been successful in correctly assessing the organization--then an elite decision will result in organizational progress and can be expected to produce only manageable conflict.
3. When there is considerable conflict within the faculty and/or between a sizeable group of faculty and the university administration; when the successful candidate has been misled and/or has misassessed the situation; when a skillful candidate has fooled the committee or they have misassessed the candidate--then the elite decision will lead to unmanageable conflict and organizational progress will be negligible.

It might be fairly pointed out that under one or more of the conditions outlined in proposition three above, no selection process is likely to produce favorable results. Perhaps "not likely" is correct, but the better question is, "Could another type of decision process more likely produce a favorable result?"

The following statements, under conditions set in three above, seem justified by the model:

1. The more arena the decision the more likley that the conflicts in values will be negotiated as the groups move toward a majority decision.
2. The more openly the conflicting interest groups have been able to participate in the decision the less likely they are to feel "worsted by crooked means" and the more likely

they are to later enter into some effort to work for the betterment of the community regardless of the decision.

3. The more a decision (with which one does not agree) can be seen as the result of an honest difference of opinion among the contesting parties rather than the result of some powerless individuals being "worsted" by powerful others--the more likely any residual conflict is to be seen as realistic (in Coser's terms) and the more manageable it is likely to be.

Thus under the conditions described in either propositions two or three, a more arena process might be expected to result in a better decision.

OTHER TYPE CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE DATA

The following conclusions, supported by data not reported in this short paper are offered. Additional publications, reporting those data and elaborating on these conclusions are planned.

Committee Composition

1. Incumbent deans and university administrators tend not to serve on search committees. Our data indicate that the vast majority of universities follow this practice. Less than 3 percent of search committee members identified themselves as administrators. However, 45 percent said they once had held some type of administrative post.
2. Students do not have a significant part of the search process. We thought student movements of the late '60s may have changed that.

Such does not seem to be the case. While 11 percent of committee persons were students, 75 percent of these were undergraduates. Both committee members and the deans selected indicated that students had low input in the process. Fifty-one percent of committee members and 56 percent of the deans indicated weak student input while only 11 percent and 13 percent of the same groups respectively said students had strong or high input.

3. Search committees tend to be composed of individuals who are of a more local (as opposed to cosmopolitan) orientation. Perhaps this fact appears too obvious inasmuch as it is the local who, by definition, is concerned with the problems of their local institution as opposed to the national concerns of the discipline. Yet in this important activity of deanship selection cosmopolitans might take an active interest. The data indicate this is not generally the case. Whether this is for better or worse, it seems to be the fact with, in all probability, the attending consequences.
4. The search committee tends to be generally larger than 6 persons and smaller than 15 persons.

Screening and Selection Process

1. The search and screening committee almost universally develops the general criteria they will use and they make these criteria a matter of public record.
2. University administration tends to play the dominant role in the selection (as opposed to the screening) process. In 99 percent of the

responses of committee members, university administration was named as the final decision maker. Both committee members and deans selected perceived university administration as having the most important role in the process, with the committee and deans seeing the search-screen committee as a close second and both the committee and the dean selected viewing the total college faculty as a rather poor runner up.

3. The communication process initiated by the screening committee, providing information for the candidates in the pool, appears from the data to be spotty, unsatisfactory from the candidate's point of view, and not of the sort to enhance the public image of the recruiting institution.
4. As the committtee moves from the initial screening decision about a pool of minimally qualified candidates to the more important decision about a group of ranked final candidates, the decision appears to be more susceptible to rumor, gossip, "Old Boy Networks," and clearly based on more private information as opposed to public information.
5. Given an assumption that faculty participation in the selection of a new dean should be high, the data indicate that such a utopian situation is not realized in most dean selection processes.
6. In descending order the university administration, the search committees, the faculty, and the student body (with almost no influence) effect the selection process. It appears that the best chance the faculty has to influence the process is by having some impact on the screening committee which apparently has almost as much influence as the university administration, albeit likely in differing aspects of the process.
7. Search committees rate a candidate's previous administrative experience, ability to lead and initiate, energy and intellectual ability and personality,

and personal experience as very important. They do not consider his/her research or publication record as nearly so important and they rate his/her personal life style and national reputation as of relatively little importance. It should be noted, however, that the above is a relative statement and no single quality or asset was rated as high or very high by less than 35 percent of all committee members.

8. Candidates who are outsiders and who have no previous experience in the deanship are at an extreme disadvantage regardless of their other qualifications. Only 13 percent of the persons selected as dean were outsiders without previous deanship experience.
9. Locals appear to be selected more often as deans than cosmopolitans and when cosmopolitans are selected they appear to be outsiders rather than insiders.
10. Slightly more often than not, candidates who are selected as dean have talked to someone on the college faculty about the position during their candidacy and prior to their on campus interview.
11. A candidate's ability in the development of graduate programs or to do research appears to have little influence in the search-screening-selection process. The one aspect of this general area which seems important to search committees is the candidate's ability to attract outside funding, but selected deans do not perceive themselves as high in this ability.
12. Given the money, time, and energy devoted to the search-screening-selection process and the importance of such a decision, the process does not appear to be very successful when one uses the criterion of satisfaction of the committee with the choice or of the dean with his/her

decision to accept the position. Only 58 percent of committee members reported they would make the same choice again, and only 56 percent of the deans selected said they would accept the position if they had it to do again. While these data are not conclusive, they do appear to raise serious questions.

13. Insiders selected as deans seem to be more satisfied with the position than are outsiders, perhaps because they were better informed about it before they were selected.

Affirmative Action*

1. Males dominated the sample of committee members comprising 76 percent of the total group.
2. Only 5 percent of the committee members identified themselves as from a racial minority (2 percent Black, 3 percent Oriental). Taken together the finding in these two areas (sex and racial composition) does not make a strong case for the strength of affirmative action.
3. All institutions made an official effort to recruit broadly by advertising in the Chronicle of Higher Education, and 50-55 percent advertised additionally in either/or both state and other national journals. Thus the minimum requirements of affirmative action, in this regard, were met by all institutions.
   a) In addition, other more "selective" methods were used to recruit candidates including: in-house solicitation, nominations by the search committee members themselves, and nominations by others on the faculty.

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*It is assumed the affirmative action implies the positive initiation of efforts to attract qualified minority group persons as candidates and not merely a mindless "color blindlessness."

Such procedures seem to indicate that although there is truly a national and open search, insiders or persons with inside contacts do have an edge.

4. The use of (obviously "off the record") telephone recommendations by persons not suggested by the candidates--reported by 68 percent of chairpersons--and the failure of 45 percent of the committee members to actually review publications of the candidates as a screening device, suggests an under use of public information and a greater use of non-public information in a process reported in other ways as open and public.
5. The failure to use either sex or national origin as an important consideration in either the selection of the larger pool of qualified candidates or in the decision about the finalist group appears to run counter to the affirmative action guidelines requiring that positive effort be made to attract qualified minority candidates as part of the pool of candidates.
6. Ways should be sought to avoid requiring the appearance of affirmative action when the decision has already been made by the institution.

Figure 1

"IDEAL TYPE" COUNCIL BEHAVIOR CONTINIUM

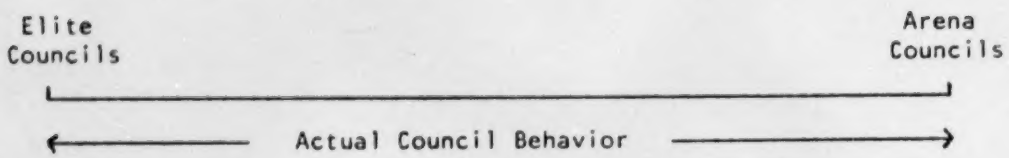

Table 1

DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE RETURNS

Type of College	Type of Role		
	Chairpersons	Committee Members	Deans Selected
Business Administration	11	49	6
Liberal Arts	3	43	6
Nursing	8	26	4
Total	22	118	16

Table 2

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SEARCH-SCREENING COMMITTEES CLASSFIED ACCORDING TO ELITE-ARENA CRITERIA

General Criteria	Specific Criteria	Search-Screening Committee Type According To Criterion
Size of Committee	(Elite) - 15 (Arena) + 15	Elite
Type of Representation	(Elite) Trustee (Arena) Delegate	Elite
Method of Decision	(Elite) Decide in Private (Arena) Debate in Public	Elite
Type of Decision	(Elite) Unanimous (Arena) Majority Vote	Arena

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